

Reverses Progress, Threatens Alaska's Children *Alaskans' Only Chance to Speak Out This Wednesday and Thursday*

Now is the Time

Let your legislators know how you feel about their cuts to programs and services for Alaskans.

Statewide Teleconferences

People wishing to testify may want to arrive early in the event testimony from previous LIOs concludes before the scheduled time. Meetings will conclude at the stated time or when all those present have made their comments.

Wednesday, April 17, 2002:

4:00 - 4:45 Dillingham, Homer, Seward, Valdez

4:45 - 5:30 Cordova, Kenai, Kodiak, Bethel

5:30 - 6:15 Glennallen, Petersburg, Sitka

7:00 - 9:00 Anchorage

Thursday, April 18, 2002:

9:00 - 10:00 Mat-su, Delta Junction, Ketchikan, Tok

10:00 - 11:00 Wrangell, Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow

4:00 - 5:15 Offnet Sites (1-888-263-1555)

5:15 - 6:30 Fairbanks

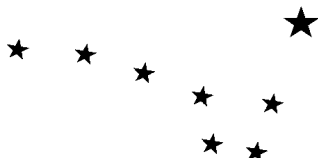
7:15 - 9:00 Juneau

Contact Your Legislator

Phone: Call your local LIO

Email:

- Representative_Firstname_Last name@legis.state.ak.us
- Senator_Firstname_Last name@legis.state.ak.us



■ Alaska's progress for children and good fortune, as one of only seven states in America with growing economies, are at risk by drastic budget cuts proposed by House and Senate majority budget writers. The proposed service cuts of tens of millions in a single year, plus the denial of strategic investments for children and the economy, will force layoffs of troopers and child protection workers, end a program to speed up adoptions and cut back on public health nurses. The House and Senate proposals also fails to fund already negotiated labor contracts and tougher new laws approved by lawmakers. Unlike House and Senate budget leaders, Gov. Knowles doesn't think Alaskans need to "feel pain" and risk jeopardizing our safety and economic good health.

■ The only chance Alaskans have to speak out about the proposed cuts is this Wednesday and Thursday when the Senate Finance Committee takes public testimony.

Here are some ways the Senate Finance subcommittee budgets halt or reverse progress toward protecting children:

- **Less protection for children** - Governor proposes 5 new troopers specifically to investigate child abuse. Senate rejects new troopers, cuts 17 existing troopers and up to 30 support staff.
- **No help for foster families** - Governor proposes \$909,000 to retain and attract foster families by increasing daily payments to families by \$3, up to \$25. Senate rejects this increase and short-funds foster care and subsidized adoptions by \$600,000.
- **Alcohol scourge continues** - Governor proposes \$4.7 million alcohol initiative to reduce waitlists for treatment, hire rural counselors, make other gains. Also proposes \$2.5 million in Smart Start to treat women alcohol abusers with children, get more help to juvenile drinkers. Senate reject almost all new investments and cuts existing statewide alcohol program by \$4.3 million (20 percent of current funding).
- **Children still at risk** - Governor proposes modest new Smart Start investments to assist children in state custody, respond to more reports of harm, reunify families, fight inhalant abuse, make other critical improvements. Senate rejects new Smart Start investments.
- **Head Start cut** – the Senate Finance Subcommittee eliminates \$500,000 in state funds that would capture additional federal funds to enroll more children into this proven program that prepares children for success in school and in life.

Continued...

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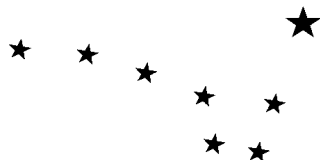
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- **School accountability hampered** – cuts of \$1.2 million in the Senate Finance Subcommittee's budget would hamper development of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam and other important tests to measure student progress, and also eliminates efforts to collect important data needed to help students and schools improve.
- **Childcare Assistance and Licensing** – the Senate Finance Subcommittee's transfer of \$350,000 in childcare funds to Head Start, combined with the \$125,000 personal services and travel reduction and absorbing the year-3 labor costs, creates a large reduction in state funds that cannot be supplanted with federal dollars. The result will be delays in enforcing licensing regulations and performing on-site reviews, critical elements to ensuring the health and safety of children and the quality of childcare programs.
- **Diplomas to be denied** – lawmakers last session approved a bill giving special-needs students unable to pass the high school graduation exam the chance to earn their diploma by meeting high standards through Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The Senate Finance Subcommittee budget would eliminate the \$130,000 needed to carry out that law.
- **Adoptions slowed** - Senate Finance Subcommittee FUNDED continuation of the "Balloon Project," which speeds up adoptions and puts at-risk children in loving, stable homes more quickly, but did not fund the \$441.8 requested for increased program costs.
- **Reports of harm investigations** - Senate Finance Subcommittee FUNDED the continuation of the Mat-Su program investigating reports of harm. However, they denied the increment that would have expanded this program to Fairbanks, Bethel and Kenai.
- **Disabled children at risk** – the Senate Finance Subcommittee's proposal would reduce \$1 million from the infant learning program with the directive to change to a needs-based program. This program provides services for children ages 0-3 to reduce or ameliorate disabling conditions.
- **Children's environmental health endangered** - The Senate Finance Subcommittee zeroes out the proposed \$175,000 children's environmental health initiative, even though parents and schools want to protect their children and we can give them the educational tools to do so through this modest investment.

Details on the Cuts

For details on proposed cuts for each department, visit the Office of Management and Budget web site:

<http://www.gov.state.ak.us/omb/akomb.htm>